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ABSTRACT

Based on the philosophy that parents need assistance in dealing with family changes and deteriorating family life, the Jordan Family Education Center (JFEC) was established in 1979 in Midvale, Utah to meet the mental health needs of families and children in the district. The center was committed to the philosophy that parents should be involved in their children's educational experience. Over 60 school psychologists provided services, and 20 classes were held during the first year. Day and evening services now include counseling, educational classes, and provision of library materials. The goals of the center are to provide inservice training on parenting skills and individual, family, or parent counseling; and to train and improve the skills of staff psychologists. A director and an advisory board head the center. The JFEC also provides seminars and workshops to clubs and church groups on an assortment of issues. Statistics show an increase in the number of people involved in the program, with levelling off occurring in 1983-84. Participation in education classes is the primary area of growth. The JFEC provides support, reinforcement, and strength to families seeking to preserve family structure. (BH)

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A PARENT EDUCATION CENTER

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CG 017976

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Philadelphia, PA, April 18-21, 1984.

A PARENT EDUCATION CENTER

Bradley L. Edgington Evelyn S. Murdock

We live in an era where dramatic changes are occurring in the American family. Many of these changes are having a deteriorating effect on the traditional family structure. Researchers have indicated that mothers work more, families have become more decentralized, and single parenting has fast become a standard. Support of the family has been losing ground to the emergence of egocentric gratification and a society based on illusion rather than reality. Hetherington (1979) reports that the divorce rate in our country doubled from 1965 to 1978; 40% of current marriages will end with divorce; and nearly 20% of children under the age of 18 lived in single parent homes in 1978. Not only is divorce on the rise but marriage is on the decline. The popularity of marriage seems to be losing way to an alternative life style. There is also considerable evidence suggesting a rapid decline in the popularity of child-rearing (Guidibaldi, 1980). Declining birth rate, increasing birth control, abortion, and child abuse and neglect represent solid evidence to suggest that positive attitudes about being a parent may become a thing of the past if the present trend continues. Lack of support from extended family members and lack of neighborhood solidarity only complicate the task of being an effective parent. As the responsibilities of raising children become more complex, many parents find themselves searching for answers to their child-rearing dilemmas in hopes of finding fulfillment in their parental role. The notion of helping parents has been well accepted but the means of meeting this need is yet to be resolved. Bronfenbrenner (1978) claims that those who need parent education or counseling the most are those who neither have, nor will, get it. These parents typically do not seek help and receive it only after they are put in a situation where they are compelled to participate. As school psychologists, we have many opportunities to identify specific needs of families and children in a school setting where objective data is collected and

the special needs of children are identified.

What is done for these children and families following the assessment process then becomes the issue of concern. It is an unfortunate situation when parents are told that their child has a given problem, but are not offered a viable intervention. When no help is provided, they lose faith in the system and withdraw support for school psychological services. In the Jordan School District this dilemna has been resolved most effectively. The Jordan Family Education Center (JFEC) was established in 1979 to meet the mental health needs of families and children within the district. The model upon which this center was established is the essence of this paper.

PHILOSOPHY

Jordan School District is committed to the philosophy that parents should be involved in their children's educational experience. It is felt that the influence home life has on the quality of a child's education is of primary importance. The student's self-confidence and immediate home environment greatly enhance learning. The intent of the program is to facilitate these conditions by relying on the expertise of the school psychology staff. Ideally, this involvement with a family is based on prevention and early intervention, rather than crisis management.

HISTORY

In the State of Utah in the late 1970's Parent Education Resource Centers (PERC) were being developed to provide services to parents in the form of educational classes, a library of parenting books and a toy lending library. Due to dissatisfaction with efficiency of service from county mental health and inadequate feedback to the school system the Jordan School District administrators appropriated money from "parent and family life" categorical funds to develop a PERC Center to service patrons of Jordan School District for the 1979-80 school year. The center was to include an office for a director, a secretary and three rooms to provide a lending library, a few educational classes, and individual and group counseling

interviews.

Materials were ordered and delivered. Construction began in the fall of 1979 to convert an old music room at Copperview Elementary into the JFEC. It was completed by November according to the specifications seen in Appendix 1. The director was asked to begin providing services and initially produced a program much more comprehensive than had been envisioned. This proposed program involved use of 80 school psychologists and school counselors who would work extra hours. This service would be supported from community school funds. When interviewed, 62 of the 80 people agreed to provide the services and 32 classes were offered, 20 of which were carried to completion during the spring of 1980. Jordan District Administrators were not aware of the great need, and the overwhelming response led to a reevaluation of their commitment during the summer of 1980. The Superintendent and the Board of Education, at that time, made the decision to give 3 1/2 hours time for each itinerant school psychologist to work on an "exchange time" basis (exchange 3 1/2 hours daytime for 3 1/2 hours evening time). School counselor's time was included with a similar agreement the following year.

A full service pattern of counseling, educational classes and library material is now being delivered. Most of these services occur three nights per week -- Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. It is now clear to Jordan District Administrators that the JFEC is the most efficient method of accessing and meeting children's educational needs on the basis of prevention and early intervention. This meets a different need than most county mental health or other community agencies who operate generally on crisis intervention. The exchange time policy is such that as the district grows, the time commitment to JFEC increases.

GOALS

It is intended that the Jordan Family Education Center be a resource to parents to provide materials, information and services during the day and evening hours. The Center's goals are:

1. To provide parents of students in Jordan School District with resources and inservice to enhance their understanding of their child's educational experience, and to promote parenting skills through family communication and other problem solving skills.

2. To provide school-related individual, family, or parent counseling and consultation.

3. To consult and train the School Psychologists and Counselors who are interested in improving their skills.

SERVICE PATTERN

The JFEC was developed with the intent of providing a program that would be as comprehensive as possible.

The critical function of the JFEC is to make certain that there is a strong link with the referring school. The school identifies the problem upon direct referral from classroom teachers, principal or parents. The school psychologist, with the school resource team, completes an adequate objective evaluation.

Services are then provided at the school to students in the form of individual or group counseling. Consultation and feedback is provided to parents. Referrals to JFEC are initiated when a specific educational or counseling intervention is needed.

Three main service patterns are offered at the JFEC: a lending library, educational classes, and counseling. A lending library has more than 1,500 items such as books, kits, filmstrips and cassettes available for checkout at no cost. Library items are catalogued under the headings of: Self-Awareness; General Parenting; Family; Religious Family Development; Children's Literature; Physical, Social, and Emotional Development; Professional Development; and Exceptional Children.

Approximately 15-30 educational classes are provided, (on a quarterly basis), with topics covering a spectrum of the needs and interests of parents, eg. growth and development, behavior management techniques, parenting skills, stress management, assertiveness training, etc. (Appendix 2). These educational experiences are developed, coordinated, and presented through the JFEC by the school psychology

staff, in consultation with the District's K-12 Curriculum Consultant team, and specifically with the District Guidance Consultant.

Individual, marriage, family and group counseling services are available to provide district patrons the opportunity to identify, accept and communicate their feelings and needs under supportive conditions while developing skills to cope effectively with their problems. This service has long existed in the Jordan School District, but is enhanced by the Center in making the services more available during evening hours. The JFEC deals with such school related problems as attendance, learning dysfunction, school phobia, school drop-out, behavioral management and discipline, and appropriate social skill development. Such student problems at school can be positively affected through optimal conditions in the home. Frequently such conditions are related to family problems; such as lack of basic parenting skills, absentee parents, divorce, death, depression, alcoholism, drug abuse, child abuse, incest, rape trauma and many other conditions for which families need information, consulting or counseling. If the problems seem to be such that long-term intervention is necessary, appropriate referrals to agencies in the area ensure optimum services to families. Pertinent information is then provided to the school. These guidelines have been established with the intent of maximizing services by meeting the needs of as many district patrons as possible. During periods of intense crisis, the JFEC staff is immediately available to assist families and individuals in finding comfort, protection and referrals to appropriate resources.

ORGANIZATION

The director of the JFEC was selected and assigned the following duties:

--Facilitate the availability and use of parent resource materials and encourage their use by parent groups and school psychologists both at the center and the respective community schools.

--Work with the Curriculum Consultant for Guidance to develop and implement parent programs which will be innovative and sensitive to parent and family needs in the district.

--Coordinate inter-staff referrals to existing services for parent and family programs outside Jordan School District.

--Be available for crisis intervention for all school age children and their families who are in a traumatic circumstance and have not immediate access to the school psychologist or other service personnel.

--Train school psychologists in the skills required to work effectively with families, which involves providing leadership in assessing the special skills and interests of staff and encouraging them toward specific program development for improving service patterns.

--Control a budget to create and maintain programs and materials within the center.

An advisory board has been created to serve as a resource team to the coordinator for giving direction, consultation and feedback for the Center's programs. It provides an objective view of the Center's services. The members are as follows:

Director of Special Programs - Chairman
School Psychologist Consultant
Inservice Consultant
Director of Education, Elementary
Director of Education, Secondary
School Administrator, Elementary
School Administrator, Secondary
Teacher, Elementary
Teacher, Secondary
Two parents
A representative from County Mental Health
Two School Psychologists
PTA Council President (Regional)

The advisory board makes certain that the function and intent of JFEC is consistent with district policy and goals. Also, it provides the vehicle for receiving and reviewing input from the consumers of JFEC.

The "exchange time" policy allows for pooling of skills and interests of all school psychological personnel and provides an evening resource for families unmatched anywhere in the state. For example; an interest and skill inventory was conducted of all school psychologists and from the findings many programs developed, enabling highly skilled, experienced and interested staff to conduct classes or services in their areas of expertise.

The Jordan Family Education Center also provides seminars and workshops to

clubs, church groups and other professional groups on subjects such as self-esteem, stress management, sex education in the home, tutoring, marriage enrichment, substance use and abuse, etc.

STATISTICS

Records have been maintained which provide valuable insights into the development and growth of the JFEC. The JFEC has been dynamic and changing since its doors were first opened in 1979. As the program has evolved, a number of changes have been created in hopes of improving the overall service pattern. The data provided below gives a general overview of how the center has grown to meet the needs of as many school patrons as possible. This section, however, does not account for the specific logistical changes which may have influenced the data, (ie. large scale college preparation courses, weekend enrichment activities, etc.).

During the 1979-80 school year 118 families were serviced in individual, marriage, or family counseling. This number increased to 192 and 241 in the school years of 1980-81 and 1981-82 respectively. By the 1982-83 school year 413 families were receiving service. This represents a 255 percent increase in counseling services provided at JFEC from 1979-80 to 1982-83.

The number of individuals involved in group counseling in the first year was higher than the total of all other counseling service patterns combined, and 154 patrons were served. This number increased the following year (1980-81) to 206, but included support groups which were conducted on a monthly basis. As individual, marriage and family counseling increased, the group numbers began to drop from 185 in 1981-82 to 148 in 1982-83. This pattern seems to be leveling off this year and stabilizing at approximately 150-160 individuals participating in group experiences. We have found in past years that fewer staff members feel confident as leaders of group counseling than other counseling service patterns and, therefore, only 4-5 staff members per year lead these groups.

Participation in educational classes is perhaps the primary area of growth

since 1979-80. In the first year 132 parents attended these classes. The enrollment rose to 606 in 1980-81 and again to 891 in 1981-82. The largest increase came in 1982-83 with 1,803 individuals participating in educational classes at the JFEC. This represents an overall increase of 890 percent from the 1979-80 school year to the 1982-83 school year. With this high enrollment, the emphasis is now being directed to improvement in the quality of classes offered.

There have been consistent increases in the total number of patrons receiving services through the JFEC since 1979-80. In the initial year, there were 454 patrons enrolled in the three main service patterns (classes, groups, and other counseling services). In 1980-81 that number rose to 1,004, and again increased in 1981-82 to 1,317. The largest increase and record enrollment came last year with a total enrollment of 2,364, for an overall increase of 420 percent since 1979-1980 (Appendix 3).

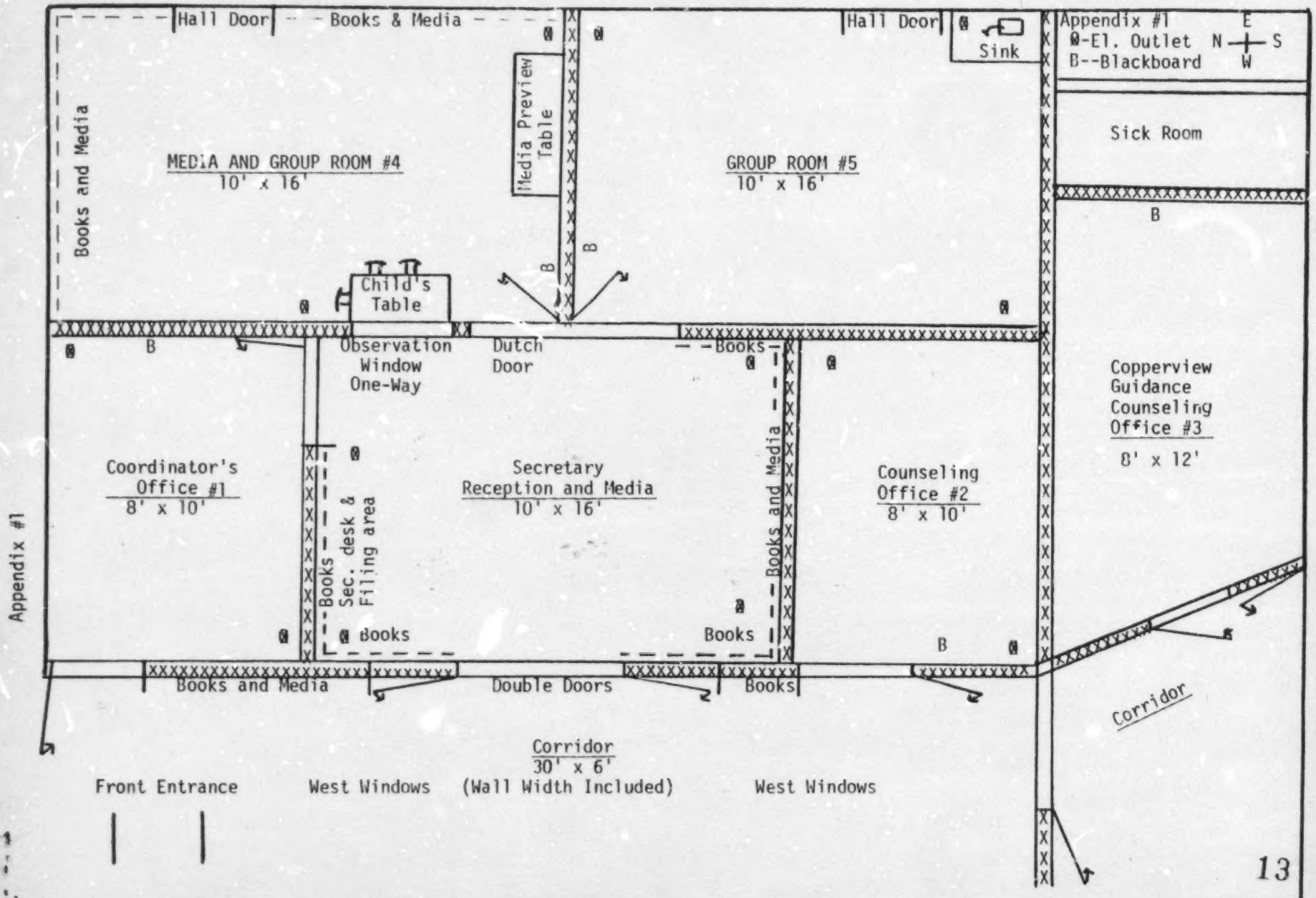
CONCLUSION:

With the Jordan Family Education Center, the Jordan School District is a front runner in providing support, reinforcement, and strength to families seeking to preserve family structure in a chaotic environment. Never in the history of our country has there been a time more devoid of significant interaction within the family. Dramatic family changes are continuing to occur and influence the quality of life for everyone. Adult-child interaction is reported by Glenn & Warner (1983) to equal approximately fourteen and one-half minutes of communication per day, twelve of which is one-way negatively toned communication. In addition, we have the data reported by Bronfenbrenner (1980) & Guidibaldi (1980) which indicates an increase in single parenting, a decentralization of families, and an increase of mothers working. Marriage and childrearing is becoming a dwindling life style and a general sense of deterioration in the American family is apparent.

With these changes comes a great need for assistance to those families looking for more desirable alternatives. Of all mental health professionals, perhaps we,

as school psychologists, have the greatest potential and opportunity to assess and intervene in meeting community needs on the basis of prevention and early intervention - thus adding to the services of county mental health or other community agencies who typically deal with crisis.

As described in the preceeding pages, the Jordan School District being sensitive to this potential; has supported the establishment, growth and development of the JFEC. By providing classes, counseling and a self-help library, we have been able to more effectively lift our pupils beyond their barriers to levels at which educational progress can be maximized. We have presented this model with the intent of motivating others who influence the lives of children to consider its merits and implement similar strategies as they are able. As each child's contributions to society will largely be determined by his/her early life experiences, it is our responsibility to influence families in such a way that the experiences of these children are good.


Hall Door
Books & Media
Books and Media
MEDIA AND GROUP ROOM #4
10' x 16'
Media Preview Table
Child's Table
B
Observation Window One-Way
Dutch Door
Hall Door
Sink
GROUP ROOM #5
10' x 16'
Books
Appendix #1
Q-El. Outlet
B--Blackboard
N
S
E
W
Sick Room
B
Copperview Guidance Counseling Office #3
8' x 12'
Coordinator's Office #1
8' x 10'
Secretary Reception and Media
10' x 16'
Counseling Office #2
8' x 10'
Books and Media
Sec. desk & Filing area
Books
Books and Media
Books
Books
Books and Media
Double Doors
Books
Corridor
Corridor
30' x 6'
(Wall Width Included)
Front Entrance
West Windows
West Windows
Appendix #1

Appendix #2

JORDAN FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER

8449 SOUTH 150 WEST — MIDVALE, UTAH 84047 — PHONE 566-3927

Dr. Raymond W. Whittenburg, Superintendent — Gordon Henninger, Center Coordinator

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
High School Credit Available

All classes are free of cost to patrons of Jordan School District

To register or obtain information call: 566-3927

Classes begin the week of March 19, 1984

Family Resource Programs

Lending Library
Teen Problems—School dropout, runaways, pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, etc.
Counseling (individual, family and group)—Call for appointment

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Call for information on the following classes:

1. A.C.T. Test Preparation and Interpretation
2. Marriage Enrichment Weekend—Paul Harris

Monday Classes:

3. Motivating the Unmotivated
   Gordon Henninger . . . . . 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Tuesday Classes:

4. Self-Esteem for Adults
   Suzanne Farr . . . . . 7:00-8:30 p.m.
5. Are You Coping with Separation, Divorce or Family Breakup? A class and counseling support. Registration continuous.
   Marianne Holtsclaw . . . . . 7:00-8:30 p.m.
6. A Class for Children of Divorce (ages 10-13)
   Nancy Wilson . . . . . 7:00-8:30 p.m.
7. Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens (manual—$7) Held at Butler Middle School
   Cal Brady . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
8. Managing Your Child's Behavior (elementary age)
   Kevin Damron . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
9. Is There a Career Change In Your Future? Career exploration class held at Alta High School (materials—$5)
   Sharon and Al Giaquinto . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Wednesday Classes:

10. How To Put Your Foot Down Without Your Children Stepping On It
    Brad Edgington . . . . . 7:00-8:30 p.m.
11. Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (manual $6)
    Cheryl Cox . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
12. The Power Within
    Richard Bird . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
13. Stress Management (materals $5)
    Frank Fenlon . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
14. A.C.T. Test Preparation Class (2 weeks) Held at Bingham High March 7 & 14)
    Yvonne Cardwell and Ken Cox . . . . 3:30-5:00 p.m.
15. Interpersonal Problem Solving Skills
    Abby Gottsegenhaas . . . . . 7:00-8:30 p.m.
16. Understanding and Managing Your Hyperactive Child
    Doug Reed . . . . . 1:00-2:30 p.m.
17. Saving Your Marriage Through the No Fault Method
    Carla Hayes and Paul Harris . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Thursday Classes:

18. Systematic Training For Effective Parenting of Teens (manual $7.50)
    Reed Baker . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
19. Assertiveness Training
    Brette Gibbs . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
20. How to Deal With the Enuretic Child: Bedwetting Class will be held the third Thursday of each month
    Robert Book . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
21. Behavior Management Seminar for Middle School Age. Held the second Thursday of each month.
    Jim Jackson and Joy Waldron . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
22. Improving Study Skills (adolescents) Held at Alta High
    Bevan Chipman . . . . . 3:00-4:30 p.m.
23. Helping Your High School Student Succeed and Avoid Dropout. Held at Brighton High School.
    Grant Kunzler . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.
24. Tough Love
    Parents supporting parents with teen crisis
    Bill Bodell . . . . . 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Appendix #3

Feb. 13, 1984

Jordan School District

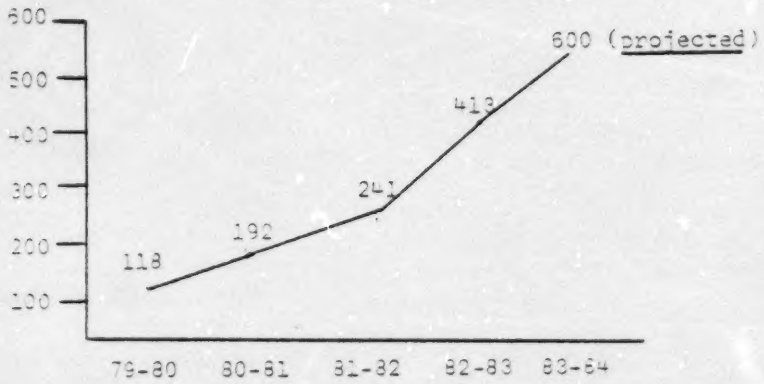
JORDAN FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER

8449 SOUTH 150 WEST — MIDVALE, UTAH 84047 — PHONE 566-3927

DR. RAYMOND W. WHITTENBURG
Superintendent of Schools

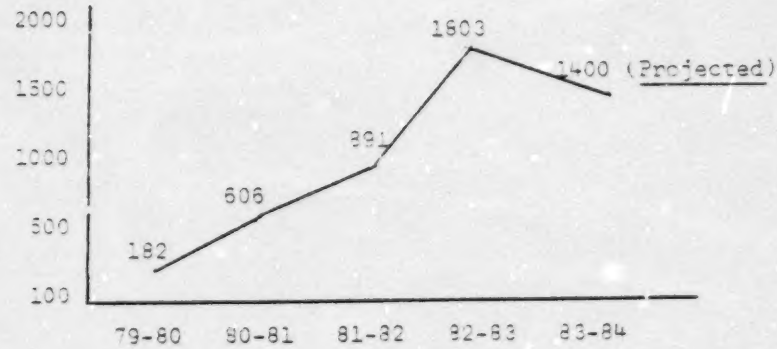
GORDON HENNINGER
Center Coordinator

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY COUNSELING



Total increase from 1979-1983
255%

EDUCATIONAL CLASSES



EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS:
Fall 1983 to date - 24 presentations, 1320 participants.

Total increase from 1979-1983
385%

GROUP COUNSELING: We are at a maximum of 60 people per quarter approximately 180 people per year and we have maintained that for the last 3 years.

YEARLY INCREASE IN TOTAL SERVICES

1979-80 (454) - 1980-81 (1004) = 63% increase
1980-81 (1004) - 1981-82 (1317) = 26% increase
1981-82 (1317) - 1982-83 (2364) = 71% increase

420%

Increase of total services (individual, family, group counseling and Ed. Classes) in the past 4 years.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE